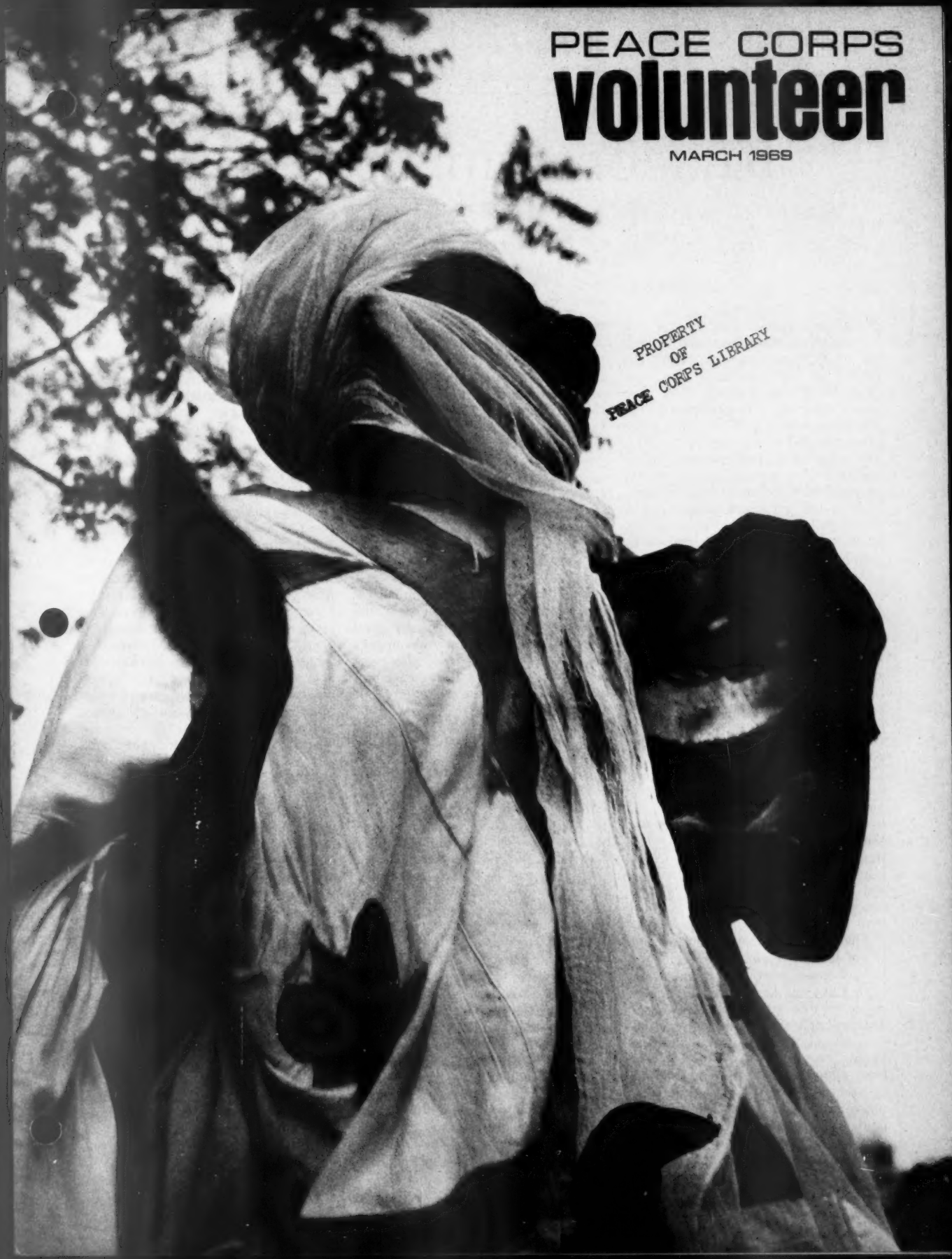

# PEACE CORPS volunteer

MARCH 1969

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By MICHAEL PATTON

# Binationalism: the latest fad?

The December-January issue of THE VOLUNTEER focused at some length on what Peace Corps is calling the "trend of binationalism." The proponents of this growing idea have made their case well. Indeed, the discussion seems to be not about the strengths and weaknesses of the idea but rather about how soon the policy can be implemented on as wide a scale as possible. Yet, some of the assumptions underlying binationalism need to be carefully examined if the idea really is to strengthen our contribution to development.

One such assumption is that host governments want to decide their own developmental destinies without outside interference. Peace Corps, then, cooperates by increasing host country autonomy in Peace Corps programming.

With increasing national and racial pride, and growing xenophobia, Peace Corps should integrate to avoid future conflicts and accusations of "neocolonialism," goes another assumption. I'm personally not so sure that growing national and racial pride is such a good thing. It's exactly such pride, in overabundance, that has been and is the cause of a lot of war, hatred and human intolerance. Peace Corps might do more for *peace* in the long run by trying to stem the tide of xenophobia, by standing up to it rather than feeding it.

The way to combat foreign control is *not* to have national personnel try to staff every position and run every agency at every level, spreading themselves too thin on too little experience. This will only increase foreign control as national programs fail. Rather, Peace Corps needs to be at the forefront showing that international aid and personnel can be offered and received in such a way that neither sender nor receiver is considered intrinsically "better" than the other.

An extension of the first assumption is that host governments have the right to decide what patterns their development will take because they know what they want and they are the only ones who can decide how to arrive at their goals. This is no simple statement. It poses a whole series of questions concerning what powers governments have, who invests power in governments, and when does government error justify change, reaction or revolution? These questions cannot be answered by Peace Corps. Indeed, the point is that these questions have not been settled finally anywhere in the world, including the United States.

The Peace Corps, then, cannot escape the long-existing dilemma between the felt needs of the rural peasants and the central government's ideas about the needs of the rural masses by putting full responsibility for programming and in-country operations on the host governments or by hiring host nationals as Peace Corps staff members.

## No inside route

We don't need to pamper developing nations into believing that political autonomy gives them an inside route in answering development questions and planning successful programs. Peace Corps has picked up a few tricks along the way, and we're still learning. In my judgment that gives us a prior responsibility to indicate what kinds of programs we think will or will not work.

The extreme of having Peace Corps do whatever the host government describes as their "policy" is just as one-sided as having Peace Corps present a policy or program and say: "Take-it-or-leave-it." Why should a Volunteer automatically push collective fields in agriculture, teach English in rural schools, or build latrines in villages because some ministry thinks it's a good idea? Why shouldn't we ask to be persuaded that the host country knows what it wants and what it's doing? After all, the Volunteer has to convince the villagers too.

Call it ethnocentrism if you like; the fact is that there are some government policies that Volunteers, whether from principle or pragmatism, have not and will not support. We've developed some pretty successful techniques for subtly ignoring or working around these distasteful policies and programs. More direct host government control could seriously hinder that useful flexibility.

A further precaution needs to be taken by recognizing the fact that host governments' policies have been known to change radically in a short time, especially after changes in leadership. If Peace Corps follows too far the line that host governments always know what is best for their own nationals, we may find ourselves in some embarrassing positions where we've been used by the government "in-group" which is suddenly "out."

In truth, given American policies and politics, it is difficult to imagine Peace Corps putting itself in such an extreme position. Therefore, it might be more useful to examine the *porte-drapeau* (color-bearer) of binationalism—the host country national and his integration into Peace Corps staff.

A major point made in favor of host nationals as Peace Corps staff members is the "increased sensitivity" that they would bring to the Peace Corps. However, it cannot be assumed either that the host national will be more sensitive than his American colleagues or that the American staff will become more sensitive because of the presence of nationals in the office.

Being born in a given country means that the person in question has been socialized to effectively operate within the norms of his society, but it does not mean that he is more "sen-

sitive" in an anthropological or political sense. Indeed, the axiom behind Peace Corps training would seem to be (and rightly so) that sensitivity, in the U.S. or abroad, is a *learned and practiced skill* and not a sixth sense arising out of intuition or the fact of one's native birth.

This is not to say that there are no host nationals who are culturally and politically sensitive. However, such sensitivity is a result of their past experiences, education and individual aptitudes, not a product of nationality. Likewise, it cannot be assumed that the American staff will grow more sensitive through intensive daily contact with these native-born people. On the other hand, it is possible that the Peace Corps staff would become so dependent on the perceptions, ideas, contacts and even relatives of only one or two host nationals that they would be less sensitive to other host nationals and government officials.

These problems would be avoided, of course, by finding the "right" national for the job. Desirable characteristics usually mentioned are: a belief in and understanding of the Peace Corps idea; a person who can give emotional support to Volunteers; a dedicated, intelligent, sensitive person able to discuss and initiate programs and ideas; someone capable of self-criticism, gentle reprimands, morale-building and extra-hour activities.

It strikes me that such "right" people are rare in U.S. society and even more rare in the developing nations. It follows then that these rare individuals are vitally needed at the heart of their own government's activities. One could even make a case for the point that it's selfish, and in the long run contrary to the best interests of the developing countries, for Peace Corps to want such extraordinarily skilled host nationals to concentrate on Peace Corps programs. Peace Corps, I dare say, will manage without them while completely national programs well may not.

We also need to ask if the flexibility and informality of the Peace Corps office will not create national personnel who will later find that they can't work in the tighter bureaucracies of their own countries. They then join the exodus of skilled but frustrated personnel leaving the developing countries. The Peace Corps objective is to make a personnel input, not to syphon much-needed national personnel for Peace Corps needs or add to an already serious brain drain.


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**ON THE COVER:** A drummer on horseback at a Muslim feast day in Adamawa Province, Nigeria.

Another difficult question is how the host country national can contribute to both the Peace Corps and his own country while observing strictly the traditional and necessary non-involvement of Peace Corps in host country politics? Are we to ask the cream of the national crop to refrain from political activities in their *own* countries? Yet the possibility of a host national using confidential information from a Volunteer in the bush for political ends is too glaring to be ignored.

At least part of the goal of binationalism would seem to be forcing the American staff (or shall we say giving them greater opportunity) to

*Continued on page 20*

*How do you prepare Volunteers to affect the way people regard themselves, to seek out those who are leading change and help them understand their potential, to occasionally insinuate change but never to impose it?*

*One Peace Corps answer is that the Volunteer prepares* himself *for such a role—through unstructured or non-directive training. This method has turned out both capable Volunteers and confused Volunteers (those who never fished any direction out of the non-directive method).*

*Unstructured training is not new, and the attitudes developed are frequently useful tools in some part of many Volunteers' work. The relevance of Charles Creesy's account of unstructured training at Escondido, Calif., is its immediate and critical application in the Volunteers' program in Ecuador. What he and his group learned in Escondido (described as old truths rediscovered) was not merely of extracurricular application in their future work but the essence of their work in leadership training among* campesinos.

*Creesy's story includes experiences common to many training programs: the struggle for organization, the emergence of trainee cliques, the agonies of self-selection and evaluation, end-of-training slumps. But he goes on to write of the parallels between the trainees' experimentation, learning and development, and what was to transpire among the* campesinos.

*"Older" Volunteers helped "plan" this training. Five of them had been through one kind of unstructured training in Puerto Rico, later got together in Ecuador and devised the leadership training program for* campesinos *(Mal Warwick's article, October* VOLUNTEER*). After a year alone in the field, they developed the leadership training concept and, with Peace Corps staff and other support, undertook a year-long pilot project. They extended for a third year and spent their 30-day home leave at Escondido "training" their replacements, among them the author.*

# Finding direction in non-directive training

**By CHARLES CREESY**

In the spring of last year 21 trainees arrived at the Peace Corps Training Center in Escondido, Calif., to prepare for the *campesino* leadership training program in Ecuador. After three weeks of eight-hour-a-day language instruction, they were sent on an unstructured field trip to Baja, Calif.; that is, they were dropped at the Mexican border and told to "go do your thing." When they returned to Escondido four days later, five Peace Corps Volunteers from Ecuador were on hand and the significant part of the stateside training began.

After two days of small-group evaluation of the field trip experience, the Volunteers and Escondido staff presented a seven-page "white paper" to the trainees. It said, in effect, that the major share of the responsibility for organizing the training program and utilizing the available resources rested with the trainees. It gave virtually no information about the program in Ecuador. Instead, it contained statements such as:

"We hope to help you learn how to learn through your own experience . . . to prepare for Ecuador, you will have to prepare to understand yourself . . . you may find that each of you will be thinking a great deal about some very basic concepts: freedom, honesty and commitment . . . we hope that in the following months

you can enlarge the dimensions of your freedom. . . ."

In the paper only two major things were structured into the program (besides five hours a day of language instruction): the arrival a month later of five Ecuadorians—three *campesinos* and two agency counterparts—and the scheduling of hour-and-a-half group dynamics sessions three times a week. All attempts by the trainees to get more specific information about training and the program in Ecuador were deftly evaded. Bewilderment, not unmixed with some anxiety, reigned.

It took a week for the trainees to begin to organize themselves, but it was a week full of intense thought and discussion. The need to organize became felt one chaotic night when three different groups each called for a general meeting of all trainees and staff the following day—all at different times. The resulting confusion was finally resolved and a common time agreed upon for the meeting, at which the first order of business was the election of a chairman to coordinate the calling of future meetings.

With that problem of group organization cleared away, the trainees' appetite was for information about Ecuador. One of the Volunteers was persuaded to show his slides of *campesino* life in the Ecuadorian Sierra and to lead a group discussion of the *hacienda* system as it functions there. As the discussion progressed, the trainees found that rather than being given information, they were being asked perplexing questions about what they had seen in the slides. The trainees' feeling that they didn't know exactly what it was they should know persisted.

Perplexed by the lack of direction given by their staff, the trainees turned to one bit of structure offered by the "white paper" and plunged into the group dynamics sessions like drowning men swimming for a life preserver. Even though the Volunteer discussion leaders abstained from leading, the trainees began to perceive from their exprience that they could profit more by focusing on what was happening among themselves than by speculating about conditions in Ecuador.

Although this process of "sensitivity training" was essentially personal and different for each individual, all of the trainees agreed that it increased their understanding of themselves and the way they related to other people.

**"... We hope that in the following months you can enlarge the dimensions of your freedom ..."**

*Trainees and Escondido staff lighten their work with Ecuadorian songs.*

—Chuck Lippi

**"It was many weeks before they realized that personal change . . . is a prior necessity for social change."**

Many of them were able to integrate what they learned from this experience into their behavior, and nearly all of them found that through continual self-evaluation their attitudes changed in significant ways. But it was many weeks before they began to realize that this kind of personal change, or enlargement of freedom, is a prior necessity for social change.

During the week after their return from Mexico there were general meetings of all trainees and Volunteers almost every evening. Frustrated by the difficulty the group experienced in reaching common decisions, and confused by the continuing "information hangup," many trainees began to express their dissatisfaction with the long hours consumed by full group meetings.

At the same time, a minority clique had emerged and was more or less running the training program—calling all of the meetings, initiating most of the ideas, and dominating most of the discussion. Eventually this group became concerned about the lack of participation of others and decided to push the issue to a showdown. Picking a meeting which had a particularly heavy agenda of important business, these five trainees agreed not to talk for the first half-hour. The result was 30 minutes of floundering during which it seemed the group as a whole could not reach any decision at all.

Then the five opened up, each in turn urging the group to undertake an evaluation of what had been happening in the program and what the real goals of training were. After some heated debate, the group decided to schedule a series of evening seminars with the Volunteers for the purpose of gathering information about the Ecuadorian agrarian reform program. The minority of five divided themselves among the seminars and individually sought to encourage evaluation, with partial success. Thereafter, they learned to be more subtle.

This incident was significant in two ways. First, the five were trying too hard to take a strong lead and deserved to be put down by the rest of the group. Second, the rest of the trainees were floundering and needed

their help. The minority was correctly defining the group's needs, but they had not yet learned how to make those needs felt by all the members of the group. Later the parallel between this experience and similar leadership-group conflicts in the *campo* situation would become apparent.

And as time went on, the trainees began to realize that the training program was evolving into an exercise in group (i.e., community) organization—which is the fundamental prerequisite for development in the rural Ecuadorian sites where they would be working. By the end of stateside training, many more relevant parallels became apparent between the problems the trainees were experiencing as a group in Escondido and those faced by the leader struggling to organize his community to work for its development: group integration, the decision-making process, definition of priorities, planning of courses of action, delegation of authority, member participation, etc.

Up to this point the process had been too abstract, and a more concrete problem was needed to provide a common focus and draw the group together. It came in the guise of self-selection. A committee already had been appointed to collaborate all the arguments pro and con, and all the trainees had agreed to submit their ideas to it. But there the proposal had rested for two weeks.

Then came the "diagnostic intermediate board"—reporting that "more than a third" of the trainees had "serious problems"—and the group was spurred to action. Significantly, those who supported total self-selection most strongly were those least concerned about selection personally, those least in danger of deselection. But they recognized that the "threat" posed by the selection process was the most widely felt problem of the group as a whole. Thus it made a natural unifying cause to mobilize the group.

It was generally felt that it would be impractical to push for pure self-selection, so a compromise measure was decided upon. The essential elements of it were a merely diagnostic mid-board with no deselection prior to in-country training, improved feedback from the selection personnel to aid self-selection, and minor modifications in the selection process, particularly the peer-evaluation system. The trainees' selection committee was given the task of presenting the proposals and supporting arguments to the assessment and selection officers.

**"Fighting the common enemy had cemented the group as perhaps no other issue could have at that stage."**

A paper was drafted and submitted to the group a few nights later. The trainees went over the 16-page draft, paragraph by paragraph, until they agreed upon a final formulation.

Then it was submitted to the officers who called a meeting with the group the very same day. There was a free-wheeling, two-hour debate, at the end of which it seemed no meaningful compromise had been reached. As it turned out, however, there were no stateside deselections by staff, although one trainee was disqualified for psychiatric reasons and three others selected themselves out of the program.

But the question of whether the battle for total self-selection was won or lost did not seem as important as the effect that the battle itself had on the trainees. Fighting the "common enemy" had cemented the group as perhaps no other issue could have at that stage. Formulating the "intellectual" arguments for self-selection turned the trainees' attention from external preoccupations to the internal concerns that *are* the heart of the program "ideology." The conflict with selection powers raised all the pertinent questions of authority-figures and relations to them, tremendously relevant to the Ecuadorian *campo*. It also encouraged intensive introspection by each individual and provided rich material for group dynamics study.

**"The training program had become an exercise in group (read community) organization and action (read development)."**

Most important was the fact that in less than a month after the "white paper"—a remarkably short period of time, all things considered—the "selection paper" marked the successful organization of the group. All the elements were there for a significant case study, but better than any case study that it could have been given, the group had the experience which it had gone through itself. Without completely realizing what was happening, the trainees had defined a problem, agreed upon a common course of action through a group process, initiated a "project" and executed it. The training program had become an exercise in group (read community) organization and action (read development).

**"Some purists may argue that interventions like these violate the non-directive philosophy."**

The trainers, guiding the process in much the same way as a "*campesino* leadership training course" in the field, could hardly have hoped for more, except, perhaps, for greater awareness of what had happened on the part of the trainees, and thus there was a subsequent push for evaluation.

Regrettably, the trainees were still hung-up on the selection issue when the Ecuadorian trainers arrived. It was, in fact, nearly a week before the matter was sufficiently resolved so that the trainees could shift away from internal concerns and concentrate on appropriate external information gathering. Thus, they were somewhat slow to begin that which they had been so anxious to do at the time of the "white paper."

As it was, the training staff used a number of gentle nudges to encourage the trainees to make better use of the Ecuadorians' stay. The most successful of these were the socio-dramas, improvised skits put on by the training staff to illustrate situations the trainees would encounter in country. The first of these, for example, portrayed a new Volunteer making his first trip into the community where he would be working. The *campesinos*, playing their own roles, showed the trainees how they might be perceived by the members of the community and graphically depicted the difficulty the Volunteer might face in explaining his reasons for being there. This socio-drama was the springboard for a thoughtful and valuable group discussion that lasted late into the night.

A similar nudge was an open evaluation session held by the training staff, which all the trainees were invited to attend. It centered on the problem of integrating the three groups of trainers—Escondido staff, Volunteers

—Mal Warwick

*These three Ecuadorian farmers join the trainees at Escondido.*

and Ecuadorians—and on the progress of the training program in general. Leading by example, it was perhaps more effective than any other method could have been in bringing home to the trainees the need for more evaluation.

While some purists may argue that interventions like these violate the non-directive philosophy, this kind of "manipulation" seems necessary if the method is to work in a limited time period. Furthermore, techniques such as a socio-drama or an open evaluation session are not in the strict sense directive. They merely provide the trainees a special kind of experience from which to learn. The trainees can heed such suggestions or ignore them, as they see fit.

Aside from a series of evening seminars, the group did not organize many activities with the Ecuadorians during their three weeks at Escondido. What was learned from them was learned largely on an informal and individual basis. Considerable information was exchanged through the Ecuadorians' participation in language classes, which frequently took the form of role-playing. Toward the end of the stateside training, two conflicting phenomena occurred. First, there was a perceptible "morale problem" among some of the trainees. Perhaps it was no more than the common slump observed late in many training programs; perhaps it was natural fatigue after so many weeks of intensity; perhaps it was in part reaction from the apparent loss of the selection battle. In any event, it was disconcerting and it became a matter of group concern. Significantly, there seem to be similar setbacks during extended projects in the *campo*.

**"The only way the new Volunteers would learn 'what is' the program was by participating in the process of its constant redefinition."**

**"There are good reasons for letting a person discover the wheel for himself, rather than showing him one already made."**

Simultaneously, other trainees who had drifted along with the crowd during the earlier weeks became increasingly enthusiastic and became more prominent in the group's activities. Some who had been the most forceful leaders earlier now felt their influence slipping, at times even sensed resentment and hostility from other trainees, and were glad to let others carry the ball. This, too, seems to have its parallel in the *campo* situation.

Nonetheless, as is almost always the case with non-directive training programs, a few trainees were dissatisfied with the program at Escondido—those who did not see the relevance of the training experience, who remained skeptical about the value of the method, or who just did not understand what it was all about. The percentage was low and did not include any of those who deselected themselves. Given the option of transferring to other programs, three chose to do so.

During the final week at Escondido, evaluation came to be the dominant concern. It started quite spontaneously in the course of a planning session for a trainee-initiated sociodrama which turned into a self-critique of the training program. It was continued in a group discussion of the socio-drama with the training staff and lasted until the early hours of the morning. Then there was a final trainee evaluation session a few nights later. The three meetings showed considerable self-awareness on the part of the trainees as to what they had experienced and what the remaining unresolved problems were.

In mid-May the trainees traveled to Ecuador for the in-country phase of the training program and departed for separate sites in the *campo*. They lived in rural communities for two and one-half weeks and were visited occasionally by Volunteers and *campesino* leaders involved in the program. The experience was totally unstructured but most of the trainees

found themselves better prepared for it than they had expected to be. Only one decided to return to the U.S. during in-country training.

The remaining 16 trainees met outside of Riobamba for a general conference with all the extending Volunteers, Peace Corps staff, Ecuadorian agency counterparts and some of the *campesino* leaders involved in the leadership training program. The first order of business was an evaluation of the in-country training experience. One small mark of success was the difference in quality between that evaluation and the one the trainees did of their field experience in Baja, Calif., way back when it all began.

The major purpose of the conference, as it evolved, was the integration of the trainees into the larger group of persons involved in the program. This was complicated by the insistence of the country director on holding a formal final selection board which reduced the group by one.

In the process of integration, the new Volunteers found themselves involved in the larger group's effort to plan for the immediate future, which also entailed working out a viable group decision-making process. One problem for some of the new Volunteers was making clear in their own minds "what is" the program. Since it is not a structure, it could only be identified by a group of people who work together (although it is not always clear who or how many people are in that group), by a set of more or less commonly held ideas about rural education and community development (including each member's freedom to hold his own divergent views), and by a number of activities in which the "group" and the "ideology" converge. Thus the only way the new Volunteers would learn "what is" the program was by participating in the process of its constant re-definition.

The final conference task was to choose sites for the new Vounteers. Studies of a number of potential areas for work were presented and discussed at length. Site selection raised many of the most fundamental questions about the general strategy and goals of the program. The immediate priorities were defined, and with these as general guidelines, the new Volunteers decided on the areas where they wanted to work.

**"People just don't seem to turn on to other people's ideas the way they do to their own."**

With that, the conference was over. And, in a technical sense, so was the formal training of the new Volunteers. Yet, it was just the beginning; for if the training program was at all successful in its primary goal of helping the trainees learn how to learn through their own experience, the real process of education started when they arrived at their sites in the Ecuadorian *campo*.

Much of the process of learning from one's own experience is inevitably the re-learning of what other people have already learned before. Thus, at one point during the course of the training program at Escondido, a staff member was heard to mutter something about "inventing the wheel twice." Yet the transferability of some kinds of knowledge has serious limitations.

There are a number of good reasons for letting a person—in this case a group of persons—discover the wheel for himself, rather than showing him one already made and giving him detailed instructions about its construction. Once you have seen a wheel its utility is pretty obvious, but imagine trying to explain one to somebody who had never seen one. And wheels are simple compared to group processes or methods of education. Furthermore, show a wheel to a man who has never seen one, and he won't be much interested unless he sees an immediate use for the thing. But if you let him discover it for himself, he'll probably go around looking for applications.

**"At Escondido, the trainee was allowed to discover the wheel for himself—for probably the umpteen millionth time in history."**

Like wheels, so it is for ideas.

People just don't seem to turn on to other people's ideas the way they do to their own. The principle has been known at least since the time of Socrates, but how many teachers actually practice it? How many students (or for that matter, Peace Corps trainees) get turned on to ideas? At Escondido, the trainee was allowed to discover the wheel for himself—for probably the umpteen millionth time in history. And it was understood better having been learned from his own experience, at least better than if it had been lectured to him. Moreover, most of the trainees became deeply committed to it because they had invested something of themselves into its discovery.

**"Just like the trainees, the campesinos cannot be lectured into understanding themselves."**

There has been a lengthy debate within Peace Corps ranks, much of it carried in the pages of this magazine, about the relative merits of this kind of training. The obvious advantage cited for it is that it does give the Volunteer good preparation for an "unstructured," "non-directed" job, as most rural community development work is. The most frequently cited disadvantage is that it often fails to provide the Volunteer with necessary skills and technical knowledge to meet specific demands in the field.

In this regard, it is often overlooked that non-directive training, properly guided, can provide the most vital "lead skill" of all—an understanding of the learning process people must go through before they can work together to change the conditions of their life. In many parts of the world, the Volunteer has to know how to help the people of a community become organized before there can be any hope for meaningful development. Without that critical understanding, no amount of technical skill will be of much help.

Just like trainees, the people with whom the Volunteer works cannot be lectured into understanding themselves or changing their attitudes. In order to understand new ideas so that change will become possible, they have to be sensitively guided—non-directively— in the process of discovering these things themselves. How do you best prepare new Volunteers for this role?

*Charles Creesy, a trainee in the process described, is a Volunteer in the Ecuadorian* campesino *leadership training program. After working at his own site, he was named Volunteer coordinator of the program. In addition to serving as correspondent for* The Volunteer, *he is editor of the in-country Volunteer publication,* El Ecuador. *Before joining the Peace Corps he edited his university paper,* The Daily Princetonian, *and worked as a journalist in Europe.*

Yoruba bronzes

# NIGERIA

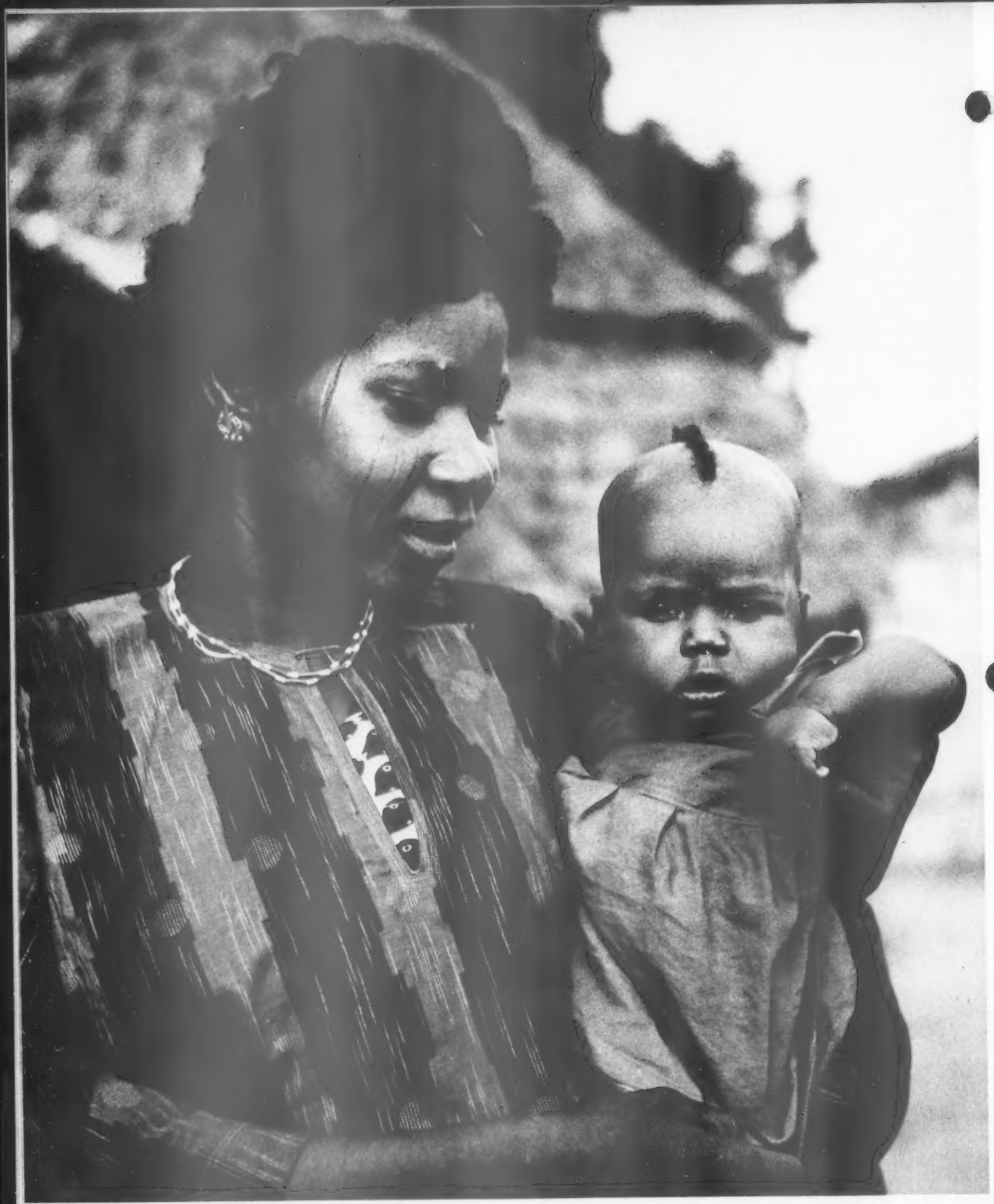
By Steve Clapp

*A young girl in the Mandara Hills*

The Adamawa Highlands stretch southward from Lake Chad in Africa, forming a boundary between what is now Nigeria's Northeast State and the Cameroon Republic. In the early 19th Century, Muslim horsemen swept across the plains below, driving small pagan tribes into the hills, where they remain today. The following photographs by Steve Clapp, a former Volunteer in Yola, Nigeria, depict the varied cultures of the Adamawa region.

*A Fulani horseman salutes the Emir of Adamawa Province during a Muslim feast day*

*A clan compound in the Mandara Hills*



*Mother and child in the Mandara Hills*

Carving of a Nupe horseman

A camel driver with cakes of salt from Lake Chad

A rooftop adornment made of the jawbones of cattle in the Guduf Pass

*Children gather about a marimba player in Yola*

*A papaya tree*

*A sacrificial bull peers out of his house in the Guduf Pass*

*Lunar landscape of volcanic stocks at Rhumsiki, Cameroon Republic*

By PAUL BELL

# Nationalism and the Peace Corps

To live in Latin America today is to live in the torrent of forces that are carrying out profound transformations in the living habits of human groups. The tendency of these forces is, first, to rouse the conviction that today Latin America no longer has to accept underdevelopment, economic and cultural dependence, poverty and injustice.

Second, and acting as a means to make the first conviction a reality, there is evident today an emphatic, unprecedented affirmation of the national values of Latin American society. There is the determination to defend these values from disintegration and exploitation in contact with other nationalities, and to put them at the service of the well-being of the people and of their search for identity as a nation.

From a sociological point of view, Colombian author Orlando Fals-Borda writes that most Latin American nations are in the midst of a dynamic evolution by which each of them as a nation is beginning to discover itself and sees, seductively within reach, the possibility of attaining its destiny and of creating more abundant conditions of life for many. The exaltation of national values and its use to fuse the aspirations and necessities of the nation and its people is the practical expression of this dynamism.

It is useful to analyze from another perspective the nature of the forces active in this picture of events that

Photos by Vernon K. Richey

*Snow-capped volcano in Vicente Perez Rosales National Park in Chile's lake region. Peace Corps Volunteer Gary Wetterberg works on the master plan for the park's development.*

*Volunteer James Russell Worden works in self-help housing in Coquimbo. Worden, who lived in Mexico for 20 years, is a skilled builder.*

some have called "the evolution of a sense of nationality." Never before has history let Latin America feel itself the master of its own destiny. Latin Americans are beginning to sense that they can retard or hasten their evolution; reject traditional bounds and accept new ties in their place; create cities and move capitals; tame the immense, sleeping interior and open it up to the outside world via fantastic roads; regiment new and vigorous political forces and give new directives to education—all this by a sovereign fiat of the national will.

There is an added dimension, however. Nationalism, when exclusivist and nearsighted, tends to reduce itself to a mystifying glorification of the national interest. It tends to regard with suspicion and distrust any attempt on the part of international interests to participate in national ventures.

We should not fail to sympathize with the desire for protection of the national resources from foreign exploitation and measures to support the development of national interests. In domestic life, this effort is seen in the anxiety for a more just participation in the fruits of the earth, for an economic as well as political democracy. We cannot but stimulate the national policy that repudiates the conditioning of Latin American national life by outside pressures foreign to her sovereignty.

Here the Peace Corps has a unique opportunity. Since we are not instruments of United States foreign policy, we are not bound to support U.S. interests abroad, but rather we are bound by the mandate to represent the ideological selflessness of our own nation and people. In other words, the Peace Corps represents the idea that the interests of the United States are best served when the social and economic needs of our host nations are met.

## Practical interpretations

In practical operational terms, I would like to attempt to interpret what this increasing nationalism means:

• First of all, it means the Peace Corps cannot continue to *program* unilaterally. We can no longer design program goals, Peace Corps Volunteer job descriptions, recruiting or training programs to coincide with Peace Corps limitations.

Peace Corps limitations should be considered when determining whether or not to discourage or encourage an agency's request, but should never be used as a mold into which to force Peace Corps programs after they have been accepted.

There can be no Peace Corps program goals apart from the goals and aspirations of the host country. In every case, ours should be an effort to contribute to the achievement of those programs or plans set forth by the national government and its fiscal as well as semi-fiscal and private agencies.

I would readily admit that in many countries Peace Corps Volunteers are antagonistic toward government agencies; they quickly adopt this position after a brief contact with the masses with whom they identify. In a recent termination conference in a South American country, Volunteers expressed emphatically the feeling that the host country agency was much more interested in "pacifying" the people than in working for development and change.

I happen to know that particular agency well enough to believe that the Volunteers' assumptions are not true, but also well enough to understand how they could draw such conclusions. This particular example is used simply to underscore that we must exercise care in choosing the agencies with which we agree to assign Volunteers, and from the time a program is begun with an agency, we have to maintain the kind of communication necessary to eliminate unfounded criticisms.

We are being culturally and economically imperialistic, however, if we think we can have our own programs, apart from host agencies and their deficiencies. I might add here that I think we are being presumptuous if we think our goal should be "institution building." I have seen a few examples in which the Peace Corps has participated in helping to

*Gary and Millie Wetterberg in their vegetable garden. She teaches school at La Ensenada and works with a mothers' club, individual homemakers and adult literacy classes.*

*Volunteer Duty Green is stationed in San Juan de la Costa, a tiny settlement in southern Chile. He encourages the planting of pine seedlings and helps organize cooperatives.*

strengthen a new agency. In no case, however, could we say that the Peace Corps can presume to take credit for "building" an institution for a host country.

I recognize the problems Volunteers encounter when too closely tied to an agency, and I will refer to some of those later. Here let me say only that in countries of increasing nationalism, we will not be—and should not be—allowed to program independently. If the Peace Corps is so limited that it cannot adapt to some of the frustrations that come with close agency ties, and if we cannot communicate our reservations, along with some suggestions for overcoming the problem, then perhaps we had better not program with that agency.

Strong nationalistic feelings in Chile, for example, dictate that requests for Peace Corps assistance are made only in areas in which Chile is unable to provide skilled personnel (e.g. city planners, trout culturists) or in areas in which, due to economic, educational or training problems, the country is not yet able to provide sufficient numbers of skilled personnel (e.g. forestry technicians, self-help housing instructors).

Now I'm sure some of you are thinking that this approach will quickly lead us to lose our idealism, and to become a junior technical assistance AID program. My response is simply that: I do not see that idealism and technical assistance are incompatible, and no country with a strong nationalistic bent, is going to invite foreign volunteers to meddle in social development. First we must recognize that the heads of agencies are not inviting us unless they have some respect and admiration for American ideals as well as technology; and second, the head of an agency has to protect himself from his Marxist critics. If he invites American Volunteers to provide *technical assistance* in a *national* program, he has some defense against the charge of inviting American Volunteers to spread American imperialism. The agency director, the Marxists, as well as the Peace Corps will all readily recognize that young American Volunteer technicians are going to project a lot more than simple and narrow technical assistance, but the agency director is protected if he has a program agreement which calls for technical assistance. The Peace Corps is protected if it fulfills its agreement to provide the technicians that were requested, and the Marxists can't say much because the country also has similar technical assistance agreements with the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia and East Germany.

## Skills we can provide

Some changes are obviously going to be necessary if we are to provide the skills that are requested. But before I go on, I want to explain that these skills are not all going to be of such a high level as to be beyond our ability to provide. Two examples will illustrate: In Chile we have two programs which utilize people with no previous skill: re-forestation and self-help housing. In both programs, the job is simple enough for us to be able to train the Volunteer adequately in a three-month period. And incidentally, community development methods given in training make it possible for the Volunteer to perform a community development as well as a technical role.

But changes will be necessary in both recruiting and training if we are to be able to fulfill the requests for more highly skilled Volunteers.

In recruiting I would suggest that more special or specific recruiting is necessary. In the past, this has worked for non-competitive programs. If the Latin America Region and the Office of Planning and Program Review and Research can determine priorities for skill areas, a method like direct mailings to specialized schools followed up by personal visits should yield adequate annual increases in specific skill areas. I would cite the examples of forestry, fisheries, city planning, and Masters in Business Administration. Training budgets will also have to be more flexible. Some skills may require 14 weeks of training, while a few may even require 20. In the overall picture, however, the lower costs of in-country training should balance out the increased costs of longer or more costly U.S. training. More flexibility will be needed in allowing for the training of small groups of 5 to 15.

In countries of increasing nationalism, the Peace Corps has to provide what the agency requests. We can no longer design a program for sale to the agency. This is a reversal of

*Forestry Volunteer Joseph Roseman also encourages farmers to plant pine seedlings to prevent erosion and to use as a future cash crop.*

*Beth Spearman with neighbor in new neighborhood of Santiago where Beth and her husband, Ashley, live and work in housing project.*

the process. An essential Peace Corps role with the agency is to find out what clearly defined jobs or "trainable" skills are needed, and either deliver the goods or reject the program.

• Increasing nationalism means, secondly, that the Peace Corps cannot continue to *administer* unilaterally.

It is a common practice for Peace Corps Volunteers to be considered first as Peace Corps Volunteers and second as *functionaries* of a national agency or institution. In atmospheres of increasing nationalism, it is a protection to the agency director to have Volunteers subject to the same working hours and internal control as the other personnel.

This means, then, that job supervision, vacation requests, per diem, job-related supplies, etc. should be the responsibility of the host agency. It means also that in the more advanced countries technical support should be given by the agency. The employment of host country nationals as Program Technical Representatives is a move in the right direction, but it does not completely solve the problem in an extremely nationalistic nation, because host country nationals thus employed by the Peace Corps are still Peace Corps employees, and there is a danger of creating administrative channels outside the framework of the host agency.

As I mentioned earlier, there are real problems involved in working so closely with an agency. Peace Corps Volunteers generally have had no previous experience with company or bureaucratic discipline, and it is not easy for them to adapt to some of the agencies' administrative procedures.

Two things are important here: one is that both the Volunteers and the agency have to be developed, educated and disciplined to work with each other. From the time the trainees are invited, it has to be made clear that there will be close ties to the agency. In training, the trainees have to start getting used to the idea of working within the structure of an institution. At the same time, the agency has to learn that Volunteers are not exactly the same as employees. It takes time and patience for an agency to learn how to best utilize Volunteers. The more an agency is involved in training and selection, the quicker they learn to live with our peculiarities.

## New role for staff

But the Peace Corps staff also has to adapt to a different role. The regional rep is no longer Master of his Kingdom. He becomes a *coordinator,* rather than a director, and he must be able to interpret the agency to the Volunteer and likewise, the Volunteer to the local agency supervisor. He can no longer unilaterally transfer Volunteers, unilaterally send a Volunteer off to a Peace Corps conference, or unilaterally terminate a Volunteer.

I see two possible approaches in bilateral administration on the national level. One is the establishment of a National Advisory Council made up of key people from both the public and private sector. The other is one which we have in Chile. We have agreements for each of our programs. The agreement clearly states the responsibility of both the Peace Corps and the host country agency, and specifies that the Volunteers are functionaries of the agency. The agreement also sets up a council or committee to deal with the problems that are peculiar to the Peace Corps' type of Volunteer cooperation.

• Finally, and perhaps the most important of all in countries of increasing nationalism, the Peace Corps should encourage the establishment and strengthening of National Voluntary Service Programs, looking toward the day of a phase out of imported Volunteers.

Here we can serve a needed role in the exchange of information and ideas, in cooperating with existing short-term or university summer programs, and in encouraging closer contact with the International Secretariat for Voluntary Service.

We must be careful to avoid the tendency to want to impose our own ideas or methods, for these National Voluntary Service Programs will and should insist on making their own mistakes. But we should not for a moment close any doors of communication or cooperation.

***Paul Bell is beginning his second tour as Peace Corps director in Chile. He was previously head of the Central America/West Indies area of the Latin America Regional Office at Peace Corps headquarters.***

*Phillip McCormick, an architecture graduate, provides technical support to Chilean homebuilders through the national self-help housing agency which employs him.*

*Fisheries Volunteer Dave Roadman does research on oysters which he and Chilean co-workers dredge up from waters near the island of Ancud, off Chile's southern coast.*

*Continued from page 3*

have direct contact with local residents. But are we not avoiding the real problem by making it too easy for the American staff? Perhaps the object should not be to bring the national into the safe, cozy, familiar atmosphere of the Peace Corps office, but rather to have the American staff get-the-hell out of the office to meet nationals on their own ground where it's likely to count a lot more. The danger might well be that having a national on the staff will give the American personnel an excuse *not* to go out to meet and deal with government officials and other citizens.

I suspect that in many cases a Peace Corps Rep can get more accurate information from government officials with whom he builds a special relationship of personal trust and confidence than he can from a host national staff member who has a vested interest in Peace Corps and his Peace Corps job, or one who may lose important contacts as he moves deeper into Peace Corps circles and farther from the heart of the government.

In the questions raised above, my object has not been to propose that nationals be excluded from Peace Corps staff positions. Rather, I have hoped to introduce a note of caution into discussions about binationalism. The last several issues of THE VOLUNTEER and some general Peace Corps scuttlebutt have aroused in me the fear that the creative idea of binationalism is becoming a slogan and is being presented as a panacea for all Peace Corps ills.

As a good and useful idea, integration of host nationals can be incorporated into individual programs where such participation is planned, needed, wanted and meaningful. The danger is that it will become a cause carried forth by its own force and momentum, a rallying cry, a guideline for evaluation, a finger to be pointed and a way to gain brownie points with host governments and Washington proponents.

Before we mount the white steed of full integration—the daring charger of gung-ho binationalism—we may need to ride a donkey cart for a while to get a better view of the surrounding countryside and to better avoid some of those big holes in the road.

*Michael Patton is a rural community development Volunteer in Fada N'Gourma, Upper Volta.*

# A look at PCVs who face the draft

Since 1961, when Congress authorized the Peace Corps, service as a Volunteer has not exempted a person from future military obligations. Upon re-examination in 1966-1967, the National Advisory Commission on Selective Service likewise concluded that: "no fair way exists, at least at present, to equate non-military with military service."

Thus, the only reasonable expectation has been that a Volunteer would be deferred during his period of Peace Corps service. Indeed, local boards were told by National Selective Service Director Gen. Lewis Hershey in 1961 that Volunteers are eligible for II-A occupational deferments in the national interest.

But somewhere along the line certain local boards began to hold out on II-A classifications for Peace Corps service. While still affecting less than one per cent of all male trainees and Volunteers, draft reasons have caused nearly 100 young men to leave Peace Corps early.

Peace Corps keeps no figures on how many of those individuals actually wind up exchanging their Volunteer status for that of a soldier. Once a person has exhausted all appeals, Peace Corps allows him to terminate and return home. From there he may either end up in an Armed Forces uniform or may avoid induction through circumstances which could range from failing the military physical to entering an educational or otherwise deferable category.

The case of practically every Peace Corps participant who loses appeals at the local and state levels has the potential to go all the way to the Presidential Appeal Board (PAB); thus, the number of cases reaching that "court of last resort" and the ratio of wins to losses at that level are useful barometers of nationwide changes in the draft climate.

From the once enviable record of eight wins to one loss at PAB in 1966, Peace Corps trainees and Volunteers nose-dived in 1967, losing more draft cases than they won, and leveled off last year to a one-to-one record.

| Year | PAB Case Totals | | PAB Ratio | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Wins | Losses | Wins to Losses | |
| 1966 | 39 | 5 | 8 | 1 |
| 1967 | 53 | 76 | 1 | 1.4 |
| 1968 | 73 | 73 | 1 | 1 |
| | 165 | 154 | | |

Of the 154 individuals classified I-A by PAB, 94 wound up terminating their Peace Corps service for draft reasons. (Prior to 1966, there were no such terminations.) Of the remaining 60 individuals, some failed the Armed Forces physical exam, some later received a II-A classification from their local boards, some passed age 26 during the appeal period, and some had their induction orders postponed until the end of their Volunteer service.

The reasons for the dramatic shift in the PAB win/loss ratio from 1966 to 1967 or 1968 are not altogether clear.

Of those three years, the national draft quota was highest in 1966:

| Year | National Quota |
|---|---|
| 1966 | 367,180 |
| 1967 | 218,700 |
| 1968 | 299,240 |

Quite a few of the losses sustained in 1967 could have involved cases originating in 1966 during the high draft call. Cases can be drawn out interminably. A Lesotho Volunteer who was appealing a I-A classification from his local board when he entered training in September, 1967, is an example. He lost his state appeal in April, 1968, and the Presidental appeal in October, 1968. In November he terminated his Peace Corps service early and as of February of this year was continuing his fight against induction.

Since late 1967, the Peace Corps, which previously acted only as an adviser to trainees and Volunteers, has actively supported requests for deferments. If a state appeal board denies a request for deferment, Director Jack Vaughn writes personally to Gen. Hershey describing the individual's work, requesting that the appeal be considered by PAB and urging that PAB grant the deferment.

Since the spring of 1968, Peace Corps has tightened up its "draft-hold" policy and thereby is sending fewer "sure losers" overseas. Generally, the "draft-hold" applies to participants who will approximate or pass age 26 by completion of service. They are not allowed to proceed overseas after completion of stateside training unless and until they obtain the II-A occupational deferment or other satisfactory resolution. This "hold" exists because Peace Corps has discovered that it is very unlikely that an individual in that age group whose case has reached the state appeal board or PAB level will be successful in his appeal.

| 1968 | PAB Actual Total | | Ratio |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Wins | Losses | Wins to Losses |
| Approach or pass 26 by completion of service. | 4 | 48 | 1 12 |
| Under 25 yrs., 10 months by completion of service. | 69 | 25 | 2.8 1 |

(Peace Corps does not intervene on behalf of a Volunteer who wishes to extend his service or re-enroll if he will approach or pass age 26 by the time he completes that extension or re-enrollment.)

Daniel Buck, the Peace Corps' selective service liaison, has said that most draft terminations have been those Volunteers who were denied deferment by the local boards either before or during training; they probably were not covered by the "draft-hold" policy (i.e., less than 24 years old or a member of all in-country training programs); and very likely, they were from the small number of states which have developed a non-deferral attitude toward Peace Corps service. And it is not unheard of today for a Volunteer deferred for his first year of service to be denied deferment for his second year.

A further consideration is the action of Gen. Hershey early in 1968 when he suspended the lists of essential activities and critical occupations previously used to guide local boards. The lists never were binding, and Hershey made it clear that local boards remained free to grant occupational deferments in the national interest. Although Peace Corps service was never listed as an essential activity or critical occupation, it was and is normal for participants to receive the II-A occupational deferment. While Hershey had publicly stated in 1961 that he believed Peace Corps service to be in the national interest, the suspension of the lists perhaps led local boards to become more stringent in granting occupational deferments in general.

Also, while no statistical evidence exists in relation to returned Volunteers and the draft, one staff member observed that very few former Volunteers ever enlist in the armed forces, many get teaching jobs and are thereby deferred and some apply for conscientious objector classifications. This may influence some local boards to feel that if they let someone join the Peace Corps, they will never have a future chance to draft him.

Even in the face of changing attitudes toward the Peace Corps on the part of some draft boards and the poor PAB win/loss record of 1967 or 1968 when compared to 1966, the per cent of all male participants who terminate for draft reasons is not high (.04% in 1966, .5% in 1967, .6% in 1968).

Of course, the running argument is that the induction of even one Volunteer is a waste of money and an incongruous action, since the Volunteer, like the soldier, has his own way of working for peace, and both at government expense.

Some Volunteers, Brazil groups for example, have demanded in their termination conferences that Peace Corps Washington take a more active stand on the issue of inductions from overseas and press for legislative guarantee of deferments during overseas service.

They have emphasized that this is not a matter of draft-dodging, but argue logically that if the U.S. government invests so much money in their selection, training and support that they should be allowed to carry out their jobs to completion and *then* face the draft. They consider the Volunteers' and the Peace Corps' commitments as contracts with the host countries and argue that an induction from overseas is a breach of contract by the U.S.

Additionally, they note that the threat of interruption and possible termination of that contract makes long-range goals and efficient work plans seem a waste of time. The resolution of a draft problem can distract a Volunteer for six months or longer, and the anxiety causes him to be less effective, one Brazil group said.

Apparently the process is not only rough on the Volunteer in question but demoralizing for his fellow Volunteers. Some strongly recommend that no Volunteer (age factor not considered) be sent overseas until his draft problem is completely settled, for to do otherwise is a grave injustice to the Volunteer and the host country nationals.

Some of those who advise Vaughn on the draft see this as unrealistic since it would delay hundreds of Volunteers each year while knowing the great majority of them would eventually receive deferments. They state that a procedure whereby Volunteers trickle into overseas assignments as they receive deferments would create much greater inefficiencies and administrative burdens on host government agencies and their programs than the disruption which is produced under the present system.

Revision in the draft seems inevitable, considering the stirrings of President Nixon, his Secretary of Defense and a number of Congressmen. But, its effects will not likely be felt by the Peace Corps until the 1970's.

# Peace department idea revived

Congress has been trying to put Peace in the President's Cabinet for years. Since 1935 alone, legislation to establish a Department of Peace has been promoted more than 50 times on Capitol Hill; Congressional hearings were held twice—in 1945 and 1947. The most recent attempt, a bill first submitted in both the House and the Senate last fall, has been getting a lot of publicity—at least, it was, until President Nixon soft-pedaled the idea at a recent press conference.

The newest bill, introduced in the Senate by Senator Vance Hartke (D.-Ind.) and the House by Rep. Seymour Halpern (R.-N.Y.), would incorporate the Peace Corps, the Agency for International Development, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, the International Agricultural Development Service and the Export-Import Bank into one department, headed by a Secretary of Peace.

The purpose of the Department of Peace, according to the bill, would be to "promote the cause and advancement of peace both in this Nation and throughout the world." The legislation calls for the establishment of an International Peace Institute, a Peace by Investment Corporation, and a Joint Committee on Peace staffed by Congressmen. In addition, the proposal outlines broad advisory and coordinating responsibilities for the Secretary of Peace such as: "advise the President with respect to the progress of peace" and "provide information . . . to assist in the establishment of those institutions which may further among the people an understanding of the true meaning of peace."

The current bid for a Department of Peace has brought nods of approval and offers to co-sponsor from a number of key Congressmen, and support from some famous constituents as well. Among those recently in Washington to show their approval of the bill were actor Paul Newman, actresses Joanne Woodward and Barbara Rush, writer Rod Serling and former Miss America Bess Meyerson.

Supporters linked the idea with the Founding Fathers by quoting Dr. Benjamin Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence who wrote an essay in the 1790's entitled "A Plan of a Peace Office for the United States." Rush advocated "an office for promoting and preserving perpetual peace in our country."

More recently, President Nixon saw the peace office idea differently. When asked for his views at a White House press conference, he said:

"I consider the Department of State to be a Department of Peace. I consider the Department of Defense to be a Department of Peace, and I can assure you that at the White House level, in the National Security Council, that is where we coordinate all of our efforts toward peace.

"I think putting one department over here as a department of peace would tend to indicate that the other departments were engaged in other activities that were not interested in peace," he concluded.

# U.N. to study volunteer corps

The United Nations General Assembly recently passed a resolution to study the feasibility of creating an international volunteer corps.

The study, proposed to the Assembly by Iran and co-sponsored by Pakistan and Greece, was adopted by a unanimous vote of 109-0-0 on December 20. It was supported in particular by the United States, the U.S.S.R., and Somalia.

In a subsequent action, members of the International Secretariat for Volunteer Service (ISVS), an organization which seeks to promote voluntary programs world-wide and includes representatives of the major volunteer-sending countries, met in Geneva in late January to discuss the possibility of assisting in the U.N. study. Peace Corps Director Jack Vaughn was chairman of the four-member U.S. delegation.

The U.N.'s Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is scheduled to begin the study of the international volunteer corps idea—an analysis which may take more than a year—when the council meets in July.

In his proposal to the Assembly, Mr. Vakil, the Iranian delegate to the U.N., suggested that ECOSOC investigate the types of jobs which international volunteers might perform; the qualifications these jobs would require; ways of recruiting, training and selecting volunteers; the financing of programs; and other related points of management, organization and implementation. He noted that: "A way must be found to harness the idealism and capacities of youth in a world-wide cooperative endeavor, free of political, racial, national and religious constraints, to alleviate human ignorance and distress."

In his supporting statement, Soviet delegate Kasatkin said: "The mobilization of a body of trained volunteers for development would do much to relieve the developing countries' acute and continuing shortage of trained personnel." But he urged that the council not overlook information from developing countries which had expelled voluntary groups, such as the Peace Corps.

At the January ISVS meeting, Peace Corps Director Vaughn proposed that the ISVS consider an experimental pilot project comprising volunteers from several countries working together as a multi-national team. Vaughn said that it was important to see if such a program offered any "promising alternatives" to bilateral programs, and that such a multi-national experiment might assist the U.N. in judging the feasibility of international voluntary efforts. He stressed that bilateral programs should not be abandoned.

The ISVS also discussed a plan to poll its 51 member countries on the subject of an international volunteer corps, with special regard for the views of countries presently receiving volunteers. Both the multi-national project and the polling plan will be further discussed at a meeting of the ISVS this month.

Some questions about the international volunteer corps idea outlined by ISVS include:

- How can the United Nations recruit, select, train and support volunteers both from developed and developing nations? Can they do it directly or would executing contractors be preferable?
- Could the U.N. volunteer organization include domestic volunteers?
- How could U.N. volunteers fit into the existing administrative system of the U.N.? Which adjustments would be necessary? What would be the status of the volunteers and the new organization?
- How would these U.N. volunteers be financed?

## CORRECTION

Overdue credit goes to Nepal associate Peace Corps director Phillip Arnold, the photographer of the pictures of Nepal which appeared on pages 4-7 of the November issue.

# Letters to The Volunteer

### Culver City will wait

To THE VOLUNTEER:

Rick Dassance, in his letter concerning "problems in Culver City (my hometown)" (Dec./Jan. VOLUNTEER), falls victim to the temptation of elaborating in print those "focus of commitment" doubts common to all Volunteers. These doubts are as natural as they are widespread and perhaps for this reason should never, never be written, since no matter how eloquent or inspiring the thought intended, the words in print become little more than a whining lament, unoriginal and uninteresting.

The soothing of Mr. Dassance's crisis through the words of a new country director (an almost too obvious father figure) is also more ludicrous than moving, especially when the comforting words are simply a repetition of the fundamental truth upon which Peace Corps exists; that is, all nations "are equally important and worthy of concern and commitment. . . ."

I find myself fervently hoping that his "troubled thoughts" have returned instead of being permanently quieted by a few facile words. Canadian poet Leonard Cohen wrote, "Let me . . . refuse to be comforted," arguing that "it is the tension" which causes one to excel, to reach, to refuse false or incomplete solutions.

Maybe Dassance *should* be in Culver City, but he *is* in Peace Corps. There is a job for him in Ethiopia and Culver City. Given the current tension in the United States, one can safely assume there will still be a job in Culver City when he leaves Ethiopia. Perhaps

# *Memorandum*

TO : The field
FROM : The editors
SUBJECT: Peace to you

DATE: March, 1969

**Adding up:** The Peace Corps has been mentioned recently in several reorganization plans proposed by government officials. Department of Peace legislation submitted by Senator Vance Hartke (D.-Ind.), (see opposite page) calls for the Peace Corps and four other government agencies to be combined at Cabinet level. Rep. Claude Pepper (D.-Fla.) has proposed a Department of Youth Affairs which would include the Peace Corps, VISTA and the Teacher Corps. *Newsweek* magazine reports that Administration task forces are considering this latter combination, though not necessarily at Cabinet level, in order to coordinate volunteer groups and other Federal programs dealing with young Americans. And the United Nations General Assembly has voted to study the feasibility of starting an international volunteer corps (see opposite page).

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**A request to editors of in-country publications:** Both THE VOLUNTEER and the Staff Training Center library in Peace Corps headquarters would like to receive copies of your publications on a direct and regular basis. They are invaluable for background information, reprints and story ideas. Please send one or more copies of each issue to THE VOLUNTEER and to the library at Peace Corps, Washington, D. C., 20525.

□ □ □

**Ethiopia Volunteer Charles Sutton** is back in the U.S. for a month, but he's not on home leave. Sutton is touring the country with the Blue Nile Group, Ethiopia's leading traditional music group, with which he is a featured *masenko* player. Sutton, who played the guitar professionally before going to Ethiopia, learned to play the traditional *masenko*—a kind of fiddle made of goatskin stretched over a wooden frame—while serving as an English instructor at Haile Selassie I University. He became so accomplished that he was invited to play with the orchestra, and he recently extended his service for a third year to serve as the group's full-time business manager. The group's tour of universities and music halls includes an appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show.

doubting whether he should have ever left will make him feel more compelled to attempt it.

JAMES CARRAGHER

Traiguen, Chile

## No takers for tea

To THE VOLUNTEER:

I have been following the "servant dialogue" in the letters column with avid interest. From the outset, I must say that I was terribly impressed with the anti-servant argument, so I immediately took an inventory of my own situation here, and decided that it would be wise to begin doing more things on my own in order to attain a more complete oneness with my village.

I laid down my issue of THE VOLUNTEER and immediately rushed to the nearest store to buy a bucket, so that I too would be able to draw water from the well as all the other villagers do. The next morning I woke up at dawn and proudly marched to the well with my new bucket. I slowly unravelled the rope and started to toss the bucket into the well, when the villagers cried out in outraged anger, in utter fury, for me to go. Since this was made clear in no uncertain terms, and having been taken completely by surprise, what alternative had I but to meekly walk away like a batter who strikes out for the last out in the ninth inning of the seventh game of the World Series.

Not allowing this setback to cloud my goal of achieving unity with the village, I next bought a kerosene stove so that I could cook tea in the morning and give it to my friends who would drop in. Learning by experience that the villagers are unusually shy, I decided that I would simply make tea for as many people as there happened to be in the room and would simply give it to each of them without the embarrassing series of questions and answers. So, after making four cups of tea and handing one to each of the three friends in the room, I sat down confidently to drink my own tea but noticed that none of the others were even touching their cups. Once again my attempts at achieving a closer rapport with my villagers were flaunted.

The facts of touchability and untouchability have since become clear to me. Would it perhaps not be more judicious, in fact, would it not be the ultimate in sensitivity for me to hire some touchable person to bring my water and make the tea? If the Peace Corps is ever to develop beyond its infant stage, it should realize that the facts of village life make such discussions as virtues and drawbacks of servants mere ripples in a pathetic vacuum.

DAVID A. WEISBROD

Deurwana, Nepal

## Cold Peace Corps hash

To THE VOLUNTEER:

As an irregular reader of THE VOLUNTEER over the past four years, the impression grows that in spite of all the words, no one knows what the Peace Corps is about, much less what impact the experience has on a Volunteer, the people he touches and the flow of history. Yet, the reformers press on, and, like John Osborn—(Dec./Jan. VOLUNTEER), serve us a fare of sensitive, concerned cold hash.

Given our American constructs, I suppose this continuing obsession with new formulas to insure the Success (not Failure) of the Peace Corps— i.e. individual Volunteers—should not dismay me. But, semantic morass that it is, I am sorry to see each issue of our magazine fall into the trap. Like the American dream of happiness, the Iranian concern with being comfortable, one wonders how can we know when we are? And there is always the nagging suspicion that, in turning our attention to solving the puzzle, we miss something far more important going on outside.

I don't mean to single out Mr. Osborn; he writes engagingly and has obviously given a great deal of thought to his subject. But for some reason his remarks sound like most of what appears in THE VOLUNTEER—remote from my daily concerns and the reality I know in Arak, remote from the reality friends who served elsewhere knew before me. It's probably just culture shock, but I can't help thinking that the Peace Corps lies gasping beneath a sea of irrelevant words, a victim of verbal over-kill; that the meaning of the people we work with, teach, live with and learn from—their frustrations, disappointments, laughter, tears, and ours—goes unspoken save for occasional outbursts "To THE VOLUNTEER."

Perhaps it's just my erratic reading habits, but I wonder if other Volunteers feel this irrelevancy, if there is some way we can speak to each other that would be helpful in clarifying our own experiences and perhaps assist those who wish to make the Peace Corps more effective.

CHRISTINE JACOBSON

Arak, Iran

*Editor's note:* THE VOLUNTEER *encourages comments on Miss Jacobson's letter, along with contributions which correspond with the concerns she articulately describes.*

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